

Description

Integrated circuit arrangement

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The present invention relates to an integrated circuit arrangement having effective protection against attacks on a circuit that is integrated in the circuit arrangement.

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In the case of integrated circuits in security-relevant applications, there arises the difficulty of having to protect the circuits against attacks which are intended to covertly discover or analyze the circuit in question, for example by means of FIB (Focused Ion Beam). Optical or mechanical analysis methods are also used.

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There are already a number of security concepts with which the integrated circuits can be protected against such attacks, in particular can be provided with a shield in which, for example, active components are used in order to shield an external attack on the circuit. However, the risk of analyzing the circuits from the rear side of a semiconductor chip, i.e. through the semiconductor substrate, has hitherto been ignored.

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It is possible to subject an integrated circuit to an analysis, the so-called "Reverse Engineering". This analysis can be used to analyse the method of operation or else to influence the method of operation for the purpose of manipulating data contents or the operating sequence.

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For the purpose of the analysis, the material which covers the surface of the chip is dissolved, for example. This material may be either a plastic molding compound, which forms the housing of the semiconductor

component, or a so-called "Globe Top", which is used merely to protect the surface of the chip and the electrical connections against mechanical damage. After the material which covers or surrounds the semiconductor chip has been removed, the passivation layer of the semiconductor chip is generally accessible. Said layer may be selectively removed by means of etching methods, laser or FIB (Focused Ion Beam) methods. Removing the respective exposed layer in layers and photographing the latter makes it possible to subsequently analyze the structure of the integrated circuit.

So that individual layers cannot be removed using grinding methods such that they can be completely analyzed, the applicant is aware of methods for producing integrated circuit arrangements in which the substrate, on which an integrated circuit is formed, is nonplanar at least in one propagation direction. However, the protective layer which covers the integrated circuit arrangement can still be removed using etching methods so that it is possible to access those layers of the substrate which have the integrated circuit.

The object of the present invention is therefore to propose an integrated circuit arrangement having an integrated circuit that is formed in a substrate, in which it is difficult to expose the substrate and there is thus improved protection against an analysis.

This object is achieved by means of the integrated circuit arrangement having the features of claim 1. Refinements emerge from the dependent claims.

The inventive integrated circuit arrangement comprises a curved substrate on which an integrated circuit is formed in a plurality of layers, for example. According

to the invention, that side of the substrate which has the integrated circuit is arranged on a chemically resistant carrier.

5 In one preferred embodiment, the carrier comprises ceramic and has a high chemical resistance, so that the carrier cannot be removed using the conventional etching methods.

10 A surface of the carrier which faces the substrate is advantageously matched to the curvature of the substrate and can be connected to the substrate in a simple manner in terms of process technology. In this case, the curved carrier additionally defines the  
15 curvature of the substrate, so that the substrate can no longer be changed to a planar shape by exerting a pressure, for example.

A description of the inventive integrated circuit  
20 arrangement with reference to the accompanying figure follows. This figure shows a cross section of an integrated circuit arrangement having a substrate which is arranged on a carrier.

25 The figure illustrates the fundamental structure of the integrated circuit arrangement 1. A substrate 2 which is generally constructed from a plurality of layers has an integrated circuit which is constructed in a known manner. The substrate 2 is curved at least in one  
30 propagation direction.

In order to protect the integrated circuit from an analysis, that side 3 of the substrate 2 which has the integrated circuit and on which, for example,  
35 semiconductor components of the integrated circuit are formed and which is convex on account of the curvature of the substrate 2 is connected to a carrier 4. To this end, the carrier 4 has a cavity 5 which corresponds to

the dimensions of the convex surface of the substrate, so that a connection can be achieved in a simple manner, for example by using an adhesive.

5 In this exemplary embodiment, the cavity 5 which is formed in the carrier 4 is dimensioned in such a manner that the substrate 2 is completely held in the cavity 5 of the carrier 4. The carrier 4 is also planar on a side 6 which is remote from the substrate 2. However,  
10 only the basic configuration of the arrangement of a curved substrate 2, which is connected to a carrier 4 that is produced from a chemically resistant material, is important to the invention. The formation of a carrier 4 which has other shapes and is, for example,  
15 merely in the form of a complete cover is thus also conceivable.

Manipulating or analyzing the integrated circuit causes the carrier 4 to be removed, so that the underlying  
20 layers of the substrate 2 become accessible. As a result of the fact that the carrier 4 is produced from a chemically resistant material, it cannot be removed by etching. The curved carrier 4 defines the substrate curvature, so that the substrate 2 can no longer be  
25 changed to a planar shape. The carrier 4 could thus be removed only by means of a grinding process which then also simultaneously destroys the substrate layers which are arranged underneath the carrier 4.

30 The invention enables very reliable protection against an analysis by combining the use of a curved substrate whose side which has the integrated circuit is arranged on a chemically resistant carrier.

List of reference symbols

- 1 Integrated circuit arrangement
- 2 Substrate
- 3 Side
- 4 Carrier
- 5 Cavity
- 6 Side